



Mimulus MEMO

California Native Plant Society
Kern County Chapter

Summer 2007

President's Message

Late spring greetings! I hope all of your native plants are thriving in your gardens, and that you have gotten out to see the wildflowers at least once! I have been amazed at the sweeps of foothill flowers that seem to thrive in spite of our strange weather this rainy season. Last weekend it was poppies on the Granite Road near Glennville. My 4 year old Western Redbud played host to Anna's and Black-chinned Humming Birds for a month, and now the Bullocks Orioles and their offspring are enjoying the fruiting gooseberries. Spring is my favorite time of year, but it seems to be going, going, gone!

During our last Board meeting we chose a name for our weeding group. Lots of funny names and 2 serious ones were submitted anonymously to the voters. And the winner is.....A.P.E.S., which stands for Alien Plant Eradication Society! I think we were struck by the possibility of great T-shirt designs, to wit: "Go APEs!", "Back to your roots", and such. The creative mind behind this new name is Linda Cooley, whose middle school science students must have rubbed off on her! She will receive a copy of Fiedler's Rare Lilies of California.

Other decisions made at the Board meeting were:

1. To support the Center for Biological Diversity in their campaign to convert the Tejon Ranch to a National or State Park.
2. To organize our second Native Garden Tour next spring (interested? Contact Lucy at lucyg391@gmail.com or Debby).
3. To ask a member to come forward to plan and schedule more meetings for next year. We have a list of speakers for you! (Interested? See above)
4. To schedule regular Board Meetings, and get the dates and times in the Mimulus Memo so that interested/idea-filled members can also attend to offer advice on how to help our Chapter of CNPS become more useful to all of us.

I always become so excited by the possibilities for Kern Chapter after a meeting where we toss around ideas, give opinions, offer help. Our thanks to Denis Kearns for volunteering to co-chair (with Debby Kroeger) the Plant Sale this fall!

Please join us for our 3 summer one night camp-outs at Horse Meadow to examine the progression of flowers. It's going to be beautiful! -Lucy

WELCOME TO NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Gary Babcock
Stephen Cooley
Dale Chitwood

Xiaohong Huang
Denis Kearns
Ruth & David Schale

David Swartz
Robert Rusby
Maxine Zimmer

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Debby Kroeger- presenting CNPS awards at KCSS Science Fair AND hosting our Board Meetings AND setting up the CNPS table and arranging for the plant drawing at the CALM birthday event.

Lorraine Unger, Steve Hampson, Lucy Clark- for hosting the CNPS table and the CALM birthday event.

Ellen Cypher- leading the tour of, and weed pulling at, the Sand Ridge Preserve

The A.P.E.S. at the Sand Ridge for pulling the desert mustard- Lorraine Unger, Arthur Unger, Don Turkal, Yvonne Turkal, Steve Hampson, Ellen Cypher, Clyde Golden, Lucy Clark, and 2 Audubon Members: Ginny Dallas and David Chilton

Don Turkal- disposing of our bags of alien desert mustard

In The Field

Our field trip to Sand Ridge, led by Ellen Cypher, was productive, informative, and a lot of fun. Thanks Ellen! Despite the lack of rain this year, there were enough different species blooming to keep things interesting, and enough of the invasive Sahara Mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*) to go around so that everybody bagged their limit. The Bakersfield Cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*) had a lot of buds, so coupled with the relative lack of grass this year, it should be a pretty dazzling display. Among the more showy flowers we saw were yellow pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula*), white tidy-tips (*Layia glandulosa*), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix californica*), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii* and *A. tessellata*), jewelflower (*Caulanthus coulteri*), bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*), spider lupine (*Lupinus benthamii*), thistle sage (*Salvia carduacea*), blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), wishbone bush (*Mirabilis californica*), sun cups (*Camissonia campestris*), and California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*).

The *Mimulus pictus* picnic at the foothill property of Lucy Clark and Clyde Golden was also quite successful. After worrying all spring that there wouldn't be flowers left due to lack of rain, we ended up dodging thunder storms during the outing. But the flowers were there, right on cue. As you may already know, *Mimulus pictus* has an interesting relationship with the Oak gooseberry (*Ribes quercetorum*). To quote Tisselmann: "Oak/chaparral gooseberry is a common and characteristic shrub of the Douglas (Blue) oak woodland; often forming large dense colonies. These dense colonies afford haven for small game, particularly cottontail rabbits and California quail. In the Greenhorn Range the ground around them is often barren from rabbits feeding close to protection. These bare places are where some of the rarest plants of the region grow; among them are *Mimulus pictus*, *M. viscidus*, *M. Johnstonii* and *Scribneria bolanderi*." We saw the rabbits and ate the gooseberries. Gooseberries, by definition, have thorns on the **stem** and may or may not have thorns on the fruit. Currents have neither. *Ribes quercetorum* has smooth dark red berries that are quite tasty. Some of the other flowers we saw were milkweed (*Asclepias californica*), Ithuriel's spear (*Triteleia laxa*), indian tobacco (*Nicotiana quadrivalvis*), granite monkey flower (*Mimulus floribundus*), tri-color/bird's-eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), bee plant (*Scrophularia californica*), goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*) and suncups (*Camissonia* sp.).

The Cedar Creek hike was perfect. The star of the show, the endemic Greenhorn fritillary, (*Fritillaria brandegei*), was in full bloom. But the runner ups, *Calochortus amoenus* and *Isopyrum occidentale* were also looking good. And we saw four (4!) different species of *Nemophila*: *maculata* (five spot), *menziesii* (baby blue eyes), *parviflora* and *pulchella*. All total, we saw almost 50 blooming species, and a fair number of other species that weren't blooming at the time.

Project Budburst

Phenology is the timing of seasonal events such as germination and flowering time in the spring. Early clues to the onset of spring have been used for centuries by farmers to time sowing in order to maximize crop production. Today, phenological patterns are used to track the effect of climate change on plants and animals, to anticipate wildflower displays (and allergies), and to make predictions about fuel loads and about when to plant our gardens.

The U.S. National Phenology Network (NPN) was created in 2006 to facilitate the collection and sharing of phenological data. **Project BudBurst** is an annual campaign designed for the public; it's the collective effort of scientists and educators interested encouraging citizen scientists to record flowering times in nearby natural areas.

Six steps will enable you to complete your phenological investigation:

1) Go to the Project Budburst website

(www.budburst.org), where you may subscribe (it's free) and find complete directions at the **Participate!** link. Here you will:

2) Select and identify one or more species using the plant list or by geographic area;

3) Locate the site where you may observe each species, including its latitude and longitude;

4) Determine which phenophase (phenological stage) you are looking for (i.e. Budburst/First Leaf, First Flower). For help, you may download plant descriptions by selecting species from the "**Plants by List**" link.

5) Report your observations (the dates of each phenophase) online.

6) Compare your observations on our maps to thousands of others around the country.

With your help, we will compile phenological information that will be compared to historical records to see how our backyards, parks, and forests are changing. You can do your part by participating in Project Budburst!

Online Membership Renewal

A New Feature on the CNPS website makes it easier to renew your membership or donate regularly.

Go on the web to www.cnps.org and you'll find a brand new poppy icon that links you to a page where you can donate to CNPS in installments: monthly, yearly, or whatever suits your schedule and budget. This feature was developed through the Membership committee, chaired by Arvind Kumar on the State Board of Directors, at the March meeting. Several members wished it could be "as easy as public radio" for renewing memberships and making regular contributions to CNPS; now it is! Tell your friends, and check it out before your membership expires. Your donations are tax-deductible and can make a real difference for our flora.

Flora of North America Reaches Halfway Mark

More than 900 botanists, working as part of the Flora of North America project, have now cataloged over half of the genera of higher plants native or naturalized in North America north of Mexico and hope to finish by 2011. This is the first comprehensive and scientifically authoritative publication treating the 20,000+ species of plants in U.S. and Canada together. (Kern CNPS member Denis Kearns is writing the chapter on the Cucurbitaceae (gourd family).)

Thirteen volumes have been published (including an introductory volume), one is being printed, and publication of two more is expected this year, out of a total of 30. The second volume of grasses (Poaceae, Volume 24) came out in early 2007, completing the monocotyledonous plants. The first of three volumes on mosses, liverworts, and hornworts is in press. Especially exciting was the publication of all three volumes on the sunflower family (Asteraceae, Vols. 19, 20, 21) last year. The treatments include identification keys, nomenclatural information, common names, descriptions, distributions (including maps), and discussions. Every genus and 1/3 to 1/6 of the species is illustrated.

FNA makes many lifetimes of study, and the best knowledge from regional floras, available in print and electronically. Editorial centers are located at Missouri Botanical Garden, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Université de Montréal, and University of Kansas. Authors base their work on knowledge of plants in the field, herbarium specimens, and review of the literature. The project also has a network of regional reviewers. Authors and editors work as volunteers; grants and donations support technical editors and botanical illustrators. The books are published by Oxford University Press--US and currently are on sale at the discounted price of \$76/volume (available at www.oup.com/us/fnaseries). More information on Flora of North America and treatments from published volumes are available at www.fna.org.

For more information contact Nancy R. Morin, FNA Business Office, P. O. Box 716, Point Arena, California, 707/882-2528, nancy.morin@nau.edu.

Science Fair Awards -Debby Kroeger

Again, this year YOU, by way of our chapter, gave awards at the County Science Fair. After science fairs at schools around the county, the winners compete at the county wide science fair sponsored by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. The first place winners for the plant biology category were: Steven Bowman from St. Francis School in Bakersfield and the team of Lindsey Lewis and Kaitlin Wright from Desert High School in Rosamond. Steven received \$50 and Lindsey and Kaitlin shared a \$150 award. I was able to attend the award presentation. There are several presenters that hand out awards after all the winners are announced. I am glad to be able to represent CNPS in this. My announcement is brief, but brings our organization to the attention of all attendees.

The following note was received: "I'm Lindsey Lewis, one of the winners of your award at the Kern County Science Fair, and I wanted to thank you for the award! Thank you for giving this award to my partner and me, it was very generous of you and your organization. Thank you also for being concerned about the plants and wildlife. Thank you again. Lindsey Lewis, Desert High School, grade 10"

Button willow grows along the Kern River, in the canyon and right here in town. It is an unusual and attractive plant. It is not related to willow, although somebody must have thought it looked willow-like. In fact, it is more closely related to Galium (bed straw)! It is also, less confusingly, called button brush. Local CNPS member Andy Honig has successfully grown it from seed for revegetation at the Panorama Vista nature preserve.



Button Willow

by Steven Christman

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Family: Rubiaceae (madder Family)

Cephalanthus occidentalis

Common Names: buttonbush, honey bells, button willow

Description

Buttonbush is a rounded, open branched wetland shrub that can potentially get as large as 20 ft (6.1 m) tall but is normally about 6-8 ft (1.8-2.4 m) tall with a similar spread. It usually has a rather scrubby appearance and a few dead branches. Buttonbush has deciduous leaves, with most arranged in opposite pairs and some in whorls of 3 or 4, even on the same plant. The leaves are oval or elliptic, 3-6 in (7.6-15.2 cm) long and 2-4 in (5.1-10.2 cm) wide. The tiny flowers are creamy white and borne in dense spherical heads a little more than 1 in (2.5 cm) in diameter. The pincusionlike flower balls stand on 2 in (5.1 cm) stalks in clusters arising from stem tips and from leaf axils. They are sweetly fragrant and produced over a long period in late spring and summer. The flowers give way to little reddish brown nutlets which give the hanging balls a rough texture. The fruit balls may persist on the tree through the winter.

There are two varieties, not considered distinct by all authorities:

Cephalanthus occidentalis var. *occidentalis* (syn. var. *pubescens*) – Common Buttonbush. Eastern North America from Nova Scotia west to Minnesota and south to Florida and eastern Texas.

Cephalanthus occidentalis var. *californicus* – California Button-willow. Southwestern North America, from western Texas west to California (Sierra Nevada foothills, San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento Valley, and the Inner North Coast Ranges) and south to Mexico and Central America.

Location

Buttonbush occurs in swamps and marshes, and along streams and ponds, from Nova Scotia south throughout Florida and the West Indies, west to Minnesota, Texas, and Mexico, and scattered across the southwestern US to central California. It typically grows in places that have standing water part of the year, and sometimes forms pure, very dense stands. There are a half dozen or so other species of *Cephalanthus* occurring in Asia and Africa; buttonbush is the only species native to the New World.

Culture

Light: Full sun is best.

Moisture: Buttonbush does best with moist soil and it cannot tolerate drought.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 5 – 10.

Propagation: Buttonbush can be grown from seeds sown in spring. The seeds germinate quickly without any pretreatment. It also is easily started from semi-ripe tip cuttings in spring or hardwood cuttings in winter, inserted in moist sand or potting medium.

Usage

Buttonbush is a wetland plant, but it can be grown in ordinary soils in a shrub border or naturalized landscape if given supplemental water during dry spells. Buttonbush is at its best, though, along a pond or stream, or in an area where the soil is frequently wet. It does best with moisture retentive soils and it tolerates soggy soils. Buttonbush responds well to pruning and can be kept at a small size.

Features

Buttonbush is a fast growing and short lived shrub that is coarse textured and not particularly attractive except for the unusual looking flowers which smell like honey and are attractive to bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. The seeds are important wildlife food, especially for ducks, and the dense, impenetrable thickets provide nesting and escape cover for many wetland birds.

The national champion buttonbush is 20 ft (6.1 m) tall and has a trunk diameter at breast height of 20 in (50.8 cm); it grows in (where else?) Buttonwillow, California.

Redbud -by Debby Kroeger

It's a *WOW* plant.

In early spring the bare branches of western redbud erupt with bright magenta colored flowers. Not just a flower or two, but clusters of pea-shaped flowers. CALM has several mature redbuds along the entry walk that cause visitors to come to a halt, look at the bush, then go back to the car and get their camera!

Western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*, provides seasonal color and variety. The vibrant flowers precede the emergence of the leaves. The small light green leaves begin to grow in as the flowers die off and produce a stunningly colorful scene. The leaves grow into a rounded shape, turn to a medium green and remain throughout the summer. As the days begin to shorten and cool, the leaves turn yellow-orange before they drop off for the winter. Along with the leaf growth, the seedpods develop. The pods will turn rusty-red and cling to the branches into the winter. As the days warm, the cycle begins again; it is a plant of interest in all seasons.

Redbud is a common native in woodland and chaparral habitats in California and the western United States. Redbud is a many-branched large shrub, growing to 20' tall and about as wide. It has naturally adapted to survive in a variety of conditions: from slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in full sun to north-facing slopes and moist canyons in the Coast Ranges. Thus, redbud is a landscaping favorite because it can adjust to garden conditions. Look for the western redbud, if you are considering planting one at home. Or, come to CALM and enjoy its display!

Growing redbud in a home landscape is quite easy. It has multiple trunks; do not try to grow it as a single trunked tree! Redbud will adjust to regular garden water (once a week or less) or survive without supplemental watering once it is established. Redbud can and should be pruned during the winter. The older larger trunks should be cut back to the base every 5 years or so. This will encourage new trunks to grow. You can also do your redbud a favor by leaving the fallen leaves around it. The leaves protect the ground (and roots) from freezing and drying. The rain and irrigation aid in decomposition which puts nutrients back into the soil. Very little work and a showy plant -a gardener's delight!

Field Trips: Don't forget our Sherman Pass wildflower triathlon!

June 22/23 (Friday/Saturday) – Horse Meadow (first of three flower experiences)

Led by Steve Hampson, Linda Cooley, and Lucy Clark

We are trying something new here! We want to share the wonderful succession of flowering plants along Sherman Pass Road. The elevation gain of about 6,000 feet to the Pass provides a long blooming period and a great diversity of plants. (Last year we counted 147 species that we thought we could identify!) Beginning with fields of shooting stars (*Dedcatheon alpinum* and *jefferyi*) and ending with explorer's gentian (*Gentiana calycosa*), there is always something new in bloom. Small Salmon Creek runs through Horse Meadow Campground, elevation 7,300 feet. We will camp over night on Friday p.m., and look for and key the flowers once a month during the summer. This could be a family event (no pets, please), and there is enough to keep all ages busy way past noon. You will need to bring all of your own camping gear, as well as Friday night dinner, Saturday breakfast, and lunch. Diehards can plan to eat Saturday dinner at Kernville. Or the real diehards can stay until Sunday! There are vault toilets and water faucets in the campground. Cost is \$10 per site per night. We will try to camp in adjoining sites, and visit and eat together. Bring field guides, camera, binoculars, and bird books. Come for one, two, or all three trips.

In Kernville, at the "T" intersection of Sierra Way and Kernville Rd., turn left onto Sierra Way and go 19.8 miles to Sherman Pass Road. Turn right on Sherman Pass Road, and go 6.2 miles to a sign for Horse Meadow Campground or Forest Road 22S05/22S12 signs. Turn right onto Forest Road. 22S12 and go 9.3 miles to the campground sign. Turn right at this sign and go 1.3 miles to entrance. At the entrance, go left at the "Y" and go over a low water bridge. Look for us here. This is all passable in passenger cars.

You must let us know by the preceding Thursday p.m. if you plan to attend! Contact Steve Hampson at shamson@gmail.com or Lucy Clark at lucyg391@gmail.com

July 20/21 (Friday/Saturday) – Horse Meadow (second of three flower experiences)

See different flowering plants! Bring a bathing suit for the individual granite tubs. After our first trip we will evaluate how things went, and make appropriate changes, so **again, let us know by Thursday p.m. if you plan to join us!**

August 17/18 (Friday/Saturday) – Horse Meadow (third and final flower experience)

See the gentians in bloom! Bring your bathing suit! Please RSVP!

If you are into native evergreen shrubs

by Don & Vonnice Turkal

Here are three from the Berberidaceae family you may want to consider (All three can be viewed at the California Living Museum Botanic Garden)

Berberis nevinii - Nevin's barberry

CNPS Status: RED "1B" 3-3-3 Federally, State & CNPS listed as an Endangered species.

- * Endemic to California, and nearly extinct in the wild.
- * 6-12 feet in height and width with absolutely striking yellow flowers when in full bloom.
- * Very drought tolerant, and make good cover and shelter.
- * Tasty, summer ripe berries edible by humans and Thrashers, Robins, Towhees, Western Bluebirds, and other berry lovers. The berries are also used for medicinal purposes.

Berberis aquifolium - Oregon grape

- * This is the most frequently grown of the barberries, is a good

choice for areas prone to root rot, and for those who are into low maintenance.

- * It doesn't mind sun or shade, and is best with regular water, but is drought tolerant.

* 3-7 feet tall spreading slowly to form dense clumps of foliage which will vary between bronze, red, or green depending on the time of year.

- * It has sweetly scented yellow flowers and grows natively right here in the Greenhorn Mountains.

* The dark blue autumn berries make a tasty jelly or a great meal for many birds.

Berberis fremontii - Fremont's barberry

- * **Rare in its native habitat, but prefers rocky dry places.**

* Plants make good cover and shelter and display beautiful yellow flowers.

* The summer ripe berries are first blue and then turn dull brown with maturity. They are edible and quite tasty, attracting Thrashers, Robins, Towhees and other berry lovers.

- * The berries are also used for medicinal purposes.

Our Kern County CNPS website is at <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/chapters/pages/kern.php>

If you know of some sites we should include links to, please let us know. Or, if you have some pictures or information on your own web page that you would like to share, that would be great! We would like to start a "local links" section on our web page where Kern CNPS members can share their thoughts, pictures, trips, gardening experiences, or whatever with other members. This newsletter and some past newsletters can be found on-line there in PDF format.

CNPS – Kern County Chapter
PO Box 9622
Bakersfield, CA 93389-9622

The mission of the California Native Plant Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to conserve them and their natural habitats through science, education, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship.